

The *flâneur* in Hungarian Literature

Budapest and Szeged in Classic and Contemporary Literary Modernism

1. The *flâneur* in European (French, English, German) and American Literature

The *flâneur*, a well-known concept created by Charles Baudelaire, is the most important archetype in the modern and postmodern city. This figure first appeared in Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris* (Eng. *Paris Spleen*) (1869), which provides a rich catalogue of the modern urban environment. The theoretical sources of the concept of the *flâneur* are texts by Walter Benjamin.

According to Benjamin, the *flâneur* (or *boulevardier*) is the eternal saunter, whose attitude is marked by power, violence and compulsion. In essence, the *boulevardier* owns the violent power of walking while adopting a view of the observer. According to this concept, the urban space is a 'market', a 'theatre', a 'panorama', and the user of this space is a 'painter', a 'screenwriter' or a 'director'.¹

From a theoretical perspective, the question is what the important objects in city discourses are. The significant experience of the modern global city is the *flâneur*'s position, and the main symbol of modern and postmodern space is the street, a liquid and flexible communal area. According to Hartmut Böhme, the *flâneur* is a dominant subject in modern urban theory.² This character can also be found in Baudelaire's famous prose poem, *Les foules* [Crowds], which considers the metropolis to be an 'art' and the *flâneur* an 'artist', who changes his roles in this cavalcade.³

The above thoughts were followed by Richard Sennett's, who, among others, speaks about the socio-cultural milieu of modernity. Sennett's work, *The Fall of Public Man* (1977), mentions the most specific example from the oeuvre of Honoré de Balzac. In 19th century French literature, firstly in Balzac's novels, the city is the place where "a human soul is completely revealed"⁴. Here the *flâneur*, who takes on the roles of screenwriters

1 Benjamin, Walter: Charles Baudelaire. Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus. In: W. B.: Gesammelte Schriften [Collected Works] Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1991, p. 509-655, 511.

2 Böhme, Hartmut: Global Cities und Terrorismus. – Über Urbanität in einer globalisierten Welt. In: Blum, Elisabeth / Neitzke, Peter (eds.): Boulevard Ecke Dschungel. Stadt-Protokolle. Hamburg: Edition Nautilus 2002, p. 69-81, 69.

3 Baudelaire, Charles: Les foules [Crowds]. In: Ch. B.: Le Spleen de Paris [Paris Spleen]. Paris: Librairie Générale Française 1964, p. 37-38.

4 Sennett, Richard: The Fall of Public Man. New York: Vintage Books 1978, p. 340.

and directors, is exploring the city as if collecting the fragments of a big picture. The place in this concept is an ‘empty space’, which gains its meaning from the cultural context.⁵

The first and best-known example of this voyeur is Alain-René Le Sage’s protagonist, ‘The Devil on Two Stix’. The hero of Le Sage novel’s (*Le Diable boiteux*, 1707), the ‘Lame Devil’, who looks into chimneys, sees through the walls, who takes the roofs away, is the archetype of the modern spectator: “The spectacle was, as you may suppose, sufficiently wonderful to rivet all the Student’s attention. He looked amazedly around him, and on all sides were objects which most intensely excited his curiosity.”⁶ Le Sage’s technique also appears in Viktor Žmegač’s ambitious literary and poetical summary. The definition which Žmegač uses is the ‘transcendent blink’.⁷ Le Sage’s novel is an excellent antecedent of modern literature; the model he established has its parallels in modernity. A similar ‘Lame Devil’ situation is present in the following poem by Baudelaire, entitled *Les fenêtres* (Eng. *Windows*) (1869):

Looking from outside into an open window one never sees as much as when one looks through a closed window. There is nothing more profound, more mysterious, more pregnant, more insidious, more dazzling than a window lighted by a single candle. What one can see out in the sunlight is always less interesting than what goes on behind a window pane.⁸

One of the major characteristics of Arthur Rimbaud’s book, *Les Illuminations* (Eng. *Illuminations*) (1872) is precisely the *flâneur*’s position. The prose poems of the volume speak about the attitude and myth of the urban walker. The primary organising image in Rimbaud’s poem, the *Ville* (Eng. *City*), is a ghostly metropolis, which appears like the pieces of a kaleidoscope: “I’m an ephemeral and not too discontented citizen of a metropolis thought to be modern because all known taste has been avoided in the furnishing and exterior of houses as well as the city plan.”⁹ The basic elements of Rimbaud’s narrative model are the artefacts of the city: passages, doorsteps, doors and streets. Lewis Mumford also mentions that the important base elements of this urban structure are streets and highways. In his reflection, architecture is a visual art and a philosophy, and the modern metropolis seems to have an artistic nature.¹⁰

5 Lukovich, Tamás: A posztmodern kor városépítészetének kihívásai [The Challenges of the Architecture of the Postmodern City]. Budapest: Pallas Stúdió 2001, p. 69–71.

6 Le Sage, Alain-René: *The Devil on Two Stix*. Transl. by Joseph Thomas. Illustrated by Kitty Shannon. Published by the Ex-classics Project, 2010, <http://www.exclassics.com>, p. 21 [16.07.2016].

7 Žmegač, Viktor: *Der europäische Roman: Geschichte seiner Poetik*. Vol. 2. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag 1991, p. 256.

8 Baudelaire, Charles: *Window*. In: Ch.B.: *Paris Spleen* (1869). Transl. by Louise Varèse. New York: A New Directions Book 1970, p. 77.

9 Rimbaud, Arthur: *City*. In: A. R.: *Illuminations*. Transl. by John Ashbery. New York: W. W. Norton and Company 2011, p. 13.

10 Mumford, Lewis: *The Highway and the City*. New York / Toronto: New Library 1964, p. 10–12.

Émile Zola's novels were also written in the spirit of this theorem. Zola's famous series, the *Rougon-Macquart-cycle*, identified these tendencies. Zola's figures, who wander among the buildings, are very frustrated and confused. The protagonists of the *Rougon-Macquart-cycle* move into a special area, since their birthplaces are often in the countryside, a mixed cultural milieu and then the new habitat is a big city, which turns out to be disappointing, a space between dreams and disillusionment. The first piece of the *Rougon-Macquart-cycle*, *La Fortune des Rougon* (Eng. *The Fortune of the Rougon*) (1871) was written in the spirit of this kind of image. The protagonists are modern conquerors; their aim is to conquer the 'city':

This Aire Saint-Mittre is of oblong shape and on a level with the footpath of the adjacent road, from which it is separated by a strip of trodden grass. A narrow blind alley fringed with a row of hovels borders it on the right; while on the left, and at the further end, it is closed in by bits of wall overgrown with moss, above which can be seen the top branches of the mulberry-trees of the Jas-Meiffren – an extensive property with an entrance lower down the road. Enclosed upon three sides, the Aire Saint-Mittre leads nowhere, and is only crossed by people out for a stroll.¹¹

The effect of this motif can be seen in the first line of the other Zola's novel, *Le Ventre de Paris* (Eng. *The Belly of Paris*) (1873): "In the silence of a deserted avenue, wagons stuffed with produce made their way toward Paris, their thudding wheels rhythmically echoing of the houses sleeping behind the rows of elm trees meandering on either side of the road."¹²

The work of Rainer Marie Rilke is said to represent a bourgeois art and society. Rilke's only novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Eng. *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*) (1910) is a sort of 'urban fairy tale', which shows the bright and dark sides of the city simultaneously. The key scene of *Malte...* depicts a strong picture, a *mise en abyme*, a summary, which represents the inferno of the urban space. This place is a mortuary, which is the metaphor for depersonalization and massification:

Die Straße war zu leer, ihre Leere langweilte sich und zog mir den Schritt unter den Füßen weg und klappte mit ihm herum, drüben und da, wie mit einem Holzschuh. Die Frau erschrak und hob sich aus sich ab, zu schnell, zu heftig, so daß das Gesicht in den zwei Händen blieb. Ich konnte es darin liegen sehen, seine hohle Form. Es kostete mich unbeschreibliche Anstrengung, bei diesen Händen zu bleiben und nicht zu schauen, was sich aus ihnen abgerissen hatte. Mir graute, ein Gesicht von innen zu sehen, aber ich fürchtete mich doch noch viel mehr vor dem bloßen wunden Kopf ohne Gesicht.¹³

11 Zola, Émile: *The Fortune of the Rougons*. Transl. by Ernest Alfred Vizetelly, London: Vizetelly and Co. 1896, p. 9.

12 Zola, Émile: *The Belly of Paris*. Transl. by Mark Kurlansky. New York: Modern Library 2006, p. 18.

13 Rilke: Rainer Maria: *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*. Berlin: Insel Verlag 2012, p 12.

The views and situations discussed above are very popular in modern Hungarian literature, as well. Typical examples of the *flâneur* can be found in the oeuvres of Sándor Bródy, Gyula Krúdy, Sándor Hunyady and Lajos Nagy. Gyula Krúdy's novel, *A vörös postakocsi* [The Crimson Coach] (1913) and the novel by Lajos Nagy, *Budapest Nagykávéház*, [Budapest Grand Café] (1936), as distinguished novels of romanticism and realism, are also similar in this respect. The next chapter will show the development concerning the literature of two cities, Budapest and Szeged.

2. Spatial Images in Classic Literary Modernism – Budapest and Szeged

The authors of the modernist periodical *Nyugat* [West] described or used their own smaller travels as topics in their works, so their biographical space was built into these sociocultural descriptions. Their journeys, especially by train, often became metaphors, and we can also claim that the particular space, the locality plays a rather significant role in the literary universe of *Nyugat*.

The building blocks of metaphors of the city are found in daily papers, drawings, genres of journalism, fiction, vignettes, and novel series, which feed upon the topoi of dubious places, schemes of the apotheosis of urbanisation, and the structures of liminal plasticity of the cities. Similar visions of city structures are found in the prose of many Hungarian authors. The serial novels by Ignác Nagy, entitled *Magyar titkok* [Hungarian Secrets] (1844–1845), by Lajos Kuthy, entitled *Hazai rejtelmek* [Domestic Mysteries] (1846–1847), the novel by József Kiss, entitled *Budapesti rejtelmek* [The Mysteries of Budapest] (1873), the book by Sándor Bródy, entitled *Nyomor* [Poverty] (1884) resemble the models of Eugène Sue's best-known serial novel, *Les Mystères de Paris* (Eng. *The Mysteries of Paris*) (1842–1843). Despite the effects of world literature, however, a special Hungarian world and authentic Hungarian subjects are created in these texts. The central theme is the one and only Hungarian metropolis, Budapest, with its various faces and identities. According to Carl Emil Schorske's so-called trichotomy-model, three parts can be differentiated in connection with the city: the guilty city, the exalted city and the city that is beyond Good and Evil.¹⁴

Gábor Gyáni uses this trichotomy-model, and in his opinion, the literature of Classic Modernism presents a genuine and authentic Central European atmosphere.¹⁵ In addition,

14 Schorske, Carl Emil: *The Idea of the City in European Thought: Voltaire to Spengler*. In: C. E. Sch.: *Thinking with History: Exploration in the Passage to Modernism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1998, p. 37–56, 37.

15 Gyáni, Gábor: *Modernitát, Modernismus und Identitätskrise: Budapest des Fin de siècle*. In: Csúri, Károly / Fónagy, Zoltán / Munz, Volker (eds.): *Kulturtransfer und kulturelle Identität: Budapest und Wien zwischen Historismus und Avantgarde*. Wien: Praesens 2008 (= Österreich-Studien Szeged Bd. 3), p. 11–27.

according to Péter Hanák's most frequently cited theoretical work, the reactions given to the challenges of civilization and the city as a place of sin, build up the sin of modernism as a cliché and become forerunners for a range of constant literary motifs.¹⁶ The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries introduced a new wave of literary styles and traditions; however, certain tendencies remained in adapting and re-thinking the descriptions of the city.

They are retraceable from the works of the artists who had gathered around *Nyugat*. The novels by Mihály Babits, in particular *A gólyakalifa* (Eng. *The Stork Caliph*) (1913), *Kártyavár* [House of Cards] (1923) and *Halálfiái* [Sons of Death] (1927) explore the tradition of the *flâneur*, the myth of the sinner, the mysterious city and the birth of the real metropolis. Kálmán Partos, the protagonist of the novel *Kártyavár* experiences the fascination with modern Budapest as follows:

Kino. Oh, was für ein furchtbares Kino, scharfes, schreiendes, ungedämpftes Licht, Schauerbilder blutiger Plakate! Zwanzig und aberzwanzig rot-weiße Plakate quadratisch an die Mauer geklebt, bunt, und überall werden sie einem von Kindern in die Hand gedrückt. Was für eine Menschenmenge an der Straßenecke, was für eine grelle Billigkeit! [...]

Die Ujvároser Redoute, wieder, wieder ein babylonischer Bau, noch kaum beendet, noch ohne gepflasterten Bürgersteig, streckte ihnen schreckend die fünfeckigen riesigen Scheiben entgegen. Café, Restaurant, alles funkelnelgeu, mit strahlend geschliffenen Lustern ... Aber ringsum was für ein Staub!¹⁷

The oeuvre of Ernő Szép, Béla Zsolt, Sándor Hunyady, Dezső Kosztolányi show thematic similarities to Western European writers pertaining to the social panorama.

The theme of Paris, this exciting and lively city appears in two important novels of Hungarian Classic Literary Modernism. The novel by András Hevesi entitled *Párizsi eső* [Paris Rain] (1936) and the one by Dezső Szomory entitled *A párizsi regény* [Paris Novel] (1929) are about this Western European metropolis. In addition, their interpretation of Paris draws a comprehensive cultural model, which resembles Central Europe. The rain in Paris, for example, is similar to the rain in Budapest, and the loneliness that is described here represents a typical 'Central European spleen'.

The images of the city and the countryside played a very important role in the writings of the *Nyugat*. For most authors (Endre Ady, Gyula Krúdy, Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi, Gyula Juhász), permanent travelling was a focus of life. So, the journey was the most dominant and characteristic motif in Kosztolányi's novels, especially in *Pacsirta* (Eng. *Skylark*) (1923) and *Aranysárkány* [The Golden Dragon] (1924). Both works have the imaginary Szabadka (Subotica) in their focus, which the author calls 'Sárszeg'.

16 Hanák, Péter: *The Garden and the Workshop*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1998, p. 147.

17 Babits, Mihály: *Das Kartenhaus*. Der Roman einer Stadt. Transl. by Stefan I. Klein. Berlin: J. M. Spaeth Verlag 1926, p. 45–47.

The authors of the *Nyugat* reflect on the exciting multicultural and often also multilingual situation. The first issue of the iconic periodical contains the definitive essay of self-identification for this generation. The writing entitled *A város* [The City] (1908) by Aladár Schöpflin, a well-known critic and literarian, summarized the attitude of the metropolis. He defined the regional identities, the opposition between the milieus of the city and the countryside and the behaviour of new settlers and native inhabitants: "Villagers when dressed up, know when it's noon no more by the church bell but by the factory whistle and the university clock."¹⁸

The birthplaces of the authors of Hungarian Classical Modernism are often used as identity markers. Bácska, Bánát, Vajdaság (Vojvodina) in Kosztolányi's and Géza Csáth's prose, the Nyírség region in Krúdy's oeuvre, the Hajdúság region and the Partium for Margit Kaffka, Szekszárd and Pécs for Babits, Szeged and Máramarosziget for Gyula Juhász are the typical and emphasized areas, which are the arenas of their literature.

The main topoi of regionalism are the mythological motifs of the small town, the dimensions at night, the images of fog. The countryside and the small town are places of desolation and immobility, which was the atmosphere that dominated the whole Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

A specific group of texts are writings about Szeged. Szeged is interpreted by a significant experience of the area and the era, the visions of spatial arrangements. The sets of motifs in the prose writings about Szeged reflect on and reveal the spirit of the place. The authors represent a real 'provincial *flâneur*', who sees and contemplates the spatial forms and structures. A typical example of this milieu is the novel by world famous film critic and theoretician, Béla Balázs. Balázs, who was not only an aesthetician but also a well-known writer for *Nyugat*, was born in Szeged in a Jewish family. Permanent travelling characterised his childhood: when he was young, the family lived in Szeged, in Lőcse and then again in Szeged. The places and spaces of his youth were related to the thematic concerns of his novels, especially his *Álmodó ifjúság* [Dreaming Youth] (1946).

In the focus of this text is the discussion about 'space'; the impact of this motif is already apparent in the first line of the novel. The anecdotal and fragmental structure in the representation of the place is a common endeavour of chapter prose: "Man summt vor sich hin, aufs Geratewohl. Plötzlich merkt man, daß es eine deutlich abgerundete Melodie werden will. Dann hält man inne und sucht wieder nach den ersten Tönen des Liedes."¹⁹

18 Schöpflin, Aladár: *A város* [The City] In: *Nyugat*, 7 (1908), p. 353–361 (Transl. by Orsolya Rauzs).

19 Balázs, Béla: *Die Jugend eines Träumers*. Transl. by Hanno Loewy. Wien: Globus Verlag 1948, p. 7.

The phenomena of space appearing in the instance of a flashlight are unfolded by the storytelling strategies in this work:

In einem farbig wogenden, von seltsamen Lichtern durchflackerten Nebel ist dort noch alles beisammen. Wenn ich zurückblicke, so sehe ich in diesen ersten Jahren meines Erwachens keinen konkreten, ständigen Schauplatz der Begebenheiten und Dinge. Nicht als ob ich mich an die Stuben, Höfe, Gassen aus dieser Zeit nicht erinnerte. Aber ich erinnere mich an sie nicht anders als an Orte, die ich in Träumen und Phantasien gesehen habe. Es ist, als hätten Traum und Wirklichkeit aufeinander abgefärbt, weil sie zu nahe beisammen gelegen waren. Innere und äußere Bilder scheinen aus derselben Substanz zu sein.²⁰

The basis of Balázs's narrative model is the provincial area, the un-abandonment, the connecting but quiet and peaceful small town experience.

These images of Szeged are found in the journalistic writings of Kálmán Mikszáth, Gyula Juhász and the prose writings of Ferenc Móra and István Tömörkény. István Tömörkény examined collections of short stories which represented typical sociocultural aspects along with the topography of the Hungarian provincial area. The significant motifs in his oeuvre are the infinite region, the endless night, the fog, the travel location, the railway station and the train.

Tömörkény's short story entitled *Virradat előtt* [Before Daybreak] (1886) takes a closer look at the writer's conception of space: "This soundless quiet has a unique soothing effect on one's mood. There is complete darkness among the trees and the thick rotting trunks; farther away, where spacious areas are overgrown with grass, light vibrates wonderfully fighting the nightly darkness."²¹

The foggy railway station symbolizes the boring life and the train is a condensed, liquid place which connects the small town with experiences. Tömörkény's prose entitled *Kubikosút* [Digger Road] (1903) shows the events from the point of view of the typical provincial *flâneur*. This spectacle is typical of Hungarian modernity: "Towards dawn, only a couple of lights are burning at the railway station here and there. Silence is full of the smell of coal, bells are rattling, and outside in front of the station the wheels of the diggers' wheelbarrows are shuffling in the coal clinker."²²

20 Balázs 1948, p. 24.

21 Tömörkény, István: *Virradat előtt* [Before Daybreak]. In: I. T.: *Két vénység és más elbeszélések* [Two Old Men and Other Stories]. Budapest: Unikornis 2001, p. 7–9, 7 (Transl. by Orsolya Rauzs).

22 Tömörkény, István: *Kubikosút* [Digger Road]. In: *Ibid.*, p. 163–168, 164 (Transl. by Orsolya Rauzs).

3. Szeged in Contemporary Hungarian Literature

The outlined and emblematic scenes of Hungarian Classic Modernism have lived on in Contemporary Hungarian Literature. Szeged as a spatial phenomenon has recently occurred in a novel by László Darvasi entitled *Virágzabálók* [Flower Guzzlers] (2009) and in the prose of László Szilasi *A harmadik híd* [The Third Bridge] (2014).

In the novel by László Darvasi, Szeged appears as an imaginary city, where the historical and the fabulous are mixed together. *Virágzabálók*, which is set in the 19th century, is a well-known piece of Contemporary Central European magic realism. The cited text below, which combines the topoi of the historical novel with motifs of the fairy tale and the anecdotic narratives, shows the modernized provincial town as a battlefield for the Hungarian walker:

Jede Stadt hat ein himmlisches Ebenbild, das aus der Welt der Ideen in die Schattenwelt der Wirklichkeit hinüberleuchtet. Die Stadt gleicht dem Körper des Menschen, sie ist ähnlich organisiert und funktioniert ähnlich, zum Beispiel weiß unser Herr Schütz sehr genau, was für ein Flickwerk der menschliche Körper ist. Er trotz einer absurden Zahl von Schicksalsschlägen und bricht von einem Mückenstich zusammen!²³

The place in this concept is a typical Eastern European area, a multicultural milieu. Actually, the real protagonists in this historical family saga are the streets, bridges, passages of Szeged and the main role is played by the magical river Tisza.

The *flâneur*'s position is an important experience in the provincial area, in this liquid and flexible communal scene. The street is a stage and the actors and narrators are observers here, where several different ethnic groups live together:

Der dort ist ein jüdischer Bürger. Siehst du, wie schnell er läuft? Der gute Mann kann nicht langsam gehen, nicht flanieren! Warum?! Weil der Arme so viel Ungewissheit in sich hat! Samstag siehst du sie selten, da legen sie die Hände in den Schoß, manche zünden nicht mal ein Licht an. [...] Die dort im Pelz, das sind Serben, kräftige und schöne Männer, manche rasieren sich zweimal am Tag. Sie haben die größten Wagen. [...] Dort im Schatten der Robinie rauchen Armenien Pfeife, sie werden immer weniger. Früher haben sie die großen Geschäfte gemacht und die meisten Rinder und Schweine in die Burg gebracht, gemeinsam mit den Griechen haben sie den meisten Tabak, das meiste Getreide und den meisten Rotwein verkauft. [...] In der Schulgasse gehen vornehme deutsche Bürger spazieren! Im Palánkviertel wohnen Serben und Deutsche Haus an Haus.²⁴

A harmadik híd by László Szilasi describes a specific experience of the city of today and the *flâneur*'s position, in which the protagonists are a few homeless people. The figures in this text have nothing except the power of walking, an outcome of the spatial experience of the post-monarchical atmosphere and the spleen of Eastern Central Europe.

23 Darvasi, László: Blumenfresser. Transl. by Heinrich Eisterer. Berlin: Suhrkamp 2013, p. 28–29.

24 Ibid., p. 24.

Urban space is truly a 'theatre' and 'panorama' in the novel, and the homeless saunterer is a 'director' and principally a 'detective':

Die Platzierung der Brandschauplätze war jedoch so verstreut, dass sich mein Verdacht nicht auf konkrete, lokale Geschädigte, wie es der Chirurg war, richtete. Ich stellte eine Liste der Tatorte zusammen (Überschwemmungsgebiet, Ballagi-See, Franzosenberg-Kleiner Wald, Große Halle, Izabella-Brücke, Tesco, Blutsee, Ballhaus) und ordnete die Elemente so lange nach Zeitpunkt, Tageszeit, Art der Verübung, Zahl der Opfer und allerlei anderen Gesichtspunkten, bis ich erkannte, dass dieses Ordnen vollkommen überflüssig war. Die wichtigste Information befand sich in der anfänglichen Liste selbst.²⁵

The homeless narrator is a passionate *boulevardier*, who uses walking to survive, as if sauntering meant life itself:

Ich mochte meine Plätze. Wenn ich Zeit und Geld und Energie dazu hatte, formte ich jeden so lange, bis er so wurde, wie ich es war. Bis ich das Gefühl hatte, dass der Platz ein Ausdruck meiner selbst war, mich auch dann darstellen konnte, wenn ich gerade nicht da war, er fähig war, mich zu repräsentieren.²⁶

Szilasi's text expresses the continuity of different historical periods, the topoi of regionalism, the continuity of culture and the identity markers of this region:

Die Große Ringstraße hat eine bestimmte Breite. Auch heute haben da vier, an manchen Stellen sechs Fahrspuren Platz. Und doch ist diese verschwenderische Breite irgendwie verfehlt. Man sieht ihr an, dass das Ganze für Pferdewagen geplant worden ist. Für vollgepackte Bauernwagen. [...]

An dieser Straßenbreite ist auch zu sehen, dass die Planer sich seinerzeit die allergrößte Breite vorgestellt haben, zu der gaben sie, im sicheren Bewusstsein der Beschränktheit ihrer schiererischen Fähigkeiten, sicher ist sicher, noch etwa ein Dutzend Meter hinzu, dann legten sie ihr Haupt beruhigt zum Schlaf nieder oder in den duftenden Schoß ihrer Ehefrauen, Geliebten oder Huren. Sie konnten sich sicher sein, die Zukunft überlistet zu haben. Sie nun wirklich. All dies würde für immer so bleiben, was immer nach ihrem Tod auch geschehen mochte. Diese Häuserzeilen würde niemand mehr von ihrem durch sie bestimmten endgültigen Platz verrücken. Eigentlich hatten sie recht.

Wir gingen auf der linken Seite des Rings weiter, auf dem breiten, rissigen, löchrigen Gehweg. [...] ²⁷

Regarding the sights, these situations are very similar in modern European and American literature: the homeless person is a postmodern *flâneur* and the sights here are the streets of Szeged, being transparent and flexible, as though the narrator conquered and swallowed up the city:

Die Kárász-Straße, die Karauschenstraße, war eigentlich ein Einkaufszentrum ohne Dach. Der innere Abschnitt der Kleinen Ringstraße unterschied sich von ihr darin, dass er nicht nach einem stinken-

25 Szilasi, László: Die dritte Brücke. Transl. by Éva Zádor Wien: Nischen Verlag 2054, p. 337.

26 Ibid., p. 173.

27 Ibid., p. 197-198.

den kleinen Fisch benannt war, sondern nach dem zähen, großmäuligen Idioten. Er war von einem Betonstreifen zweigeteilt, so konnten die Einwohner sich nicht nur zu Fuß, sondern auch in ihren Autos sitzend auf ihm bewegen. Wir betrachteten sie. [...] Sie grinsten wie satte Honigkuchenpferde. Glaubten daran, dass die plötzlich auf verwirrende Weise gnädig gewordene europäische Geschichte und Weltgeschichte ihnen in dieser freien Welt endlich die Rolle eines Mitglieds der Techno-Gentry oder eines Großgrundbesitzers vom alten Schlag zugeteilt hatte. Wir empfanden auch Mitleid für sie, glaube ich. Doch eher kam Wut in uns auf. Das war es, was ihre Freude in uns auslöste.²⁸

The detailed topics of these texts that deal with socio-cultural aspects along with the topography of the Eastern Central European city show an exceptional literary richness. The review of the spatial shapes in the prose is interpreted by significant experiences of the era, the vision of spatial arrangements and the tendencies of universal modernity in literature.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 213.